Law on the Frontlines
Legal Reference for Public Libraries

Via Canva

Foundations of Law
for
Public Library Reference
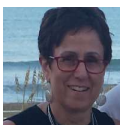
TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC 2022 03 rev.

Introductions

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2

Pre-Assessment

Review each of the following statements and jot down a response of TRUE or FALSE. Keep your responses. We will review at the end of class.

1. When someone asks for the law, they just need the Code.

2. If a patron asks for a legal form, I know where to look to find it.

3. Laws are pretty much the same between the states. What is law in Pennsylvania is the same as in Maryland.

4. If a patron wants to appeal their case, I know that information on the Court of Appeals is all that they need.

5. When a patron asks for court cases, I can help them identify which cases will be most helpful for them to use.

Learning Outcomes

🏛 Describe the structure of government

✖ Explain the connection between the structure of government and finding law

🔍 Utilize primary sources of law

📄 Assess options for forms and select appropriate options
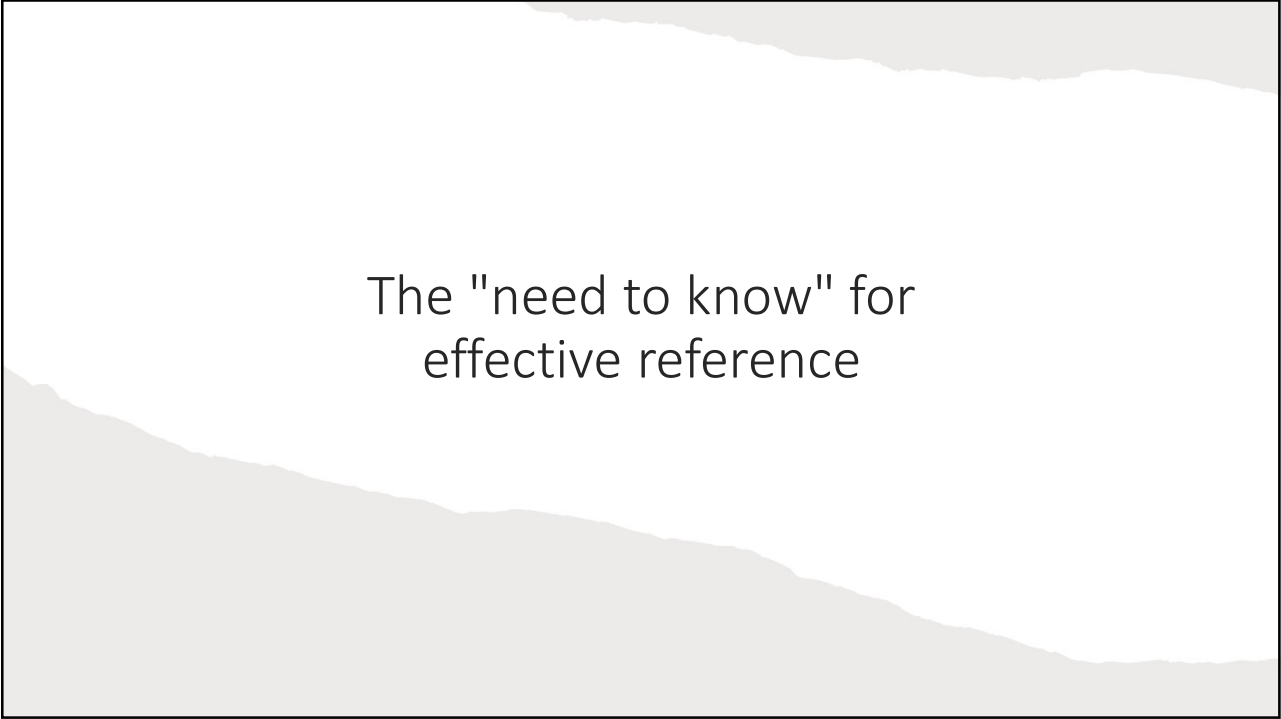
Access to Justice

A quick review…

What is Law?

Language passed by government bodies that holds force over all parties in a particular jurisdiction
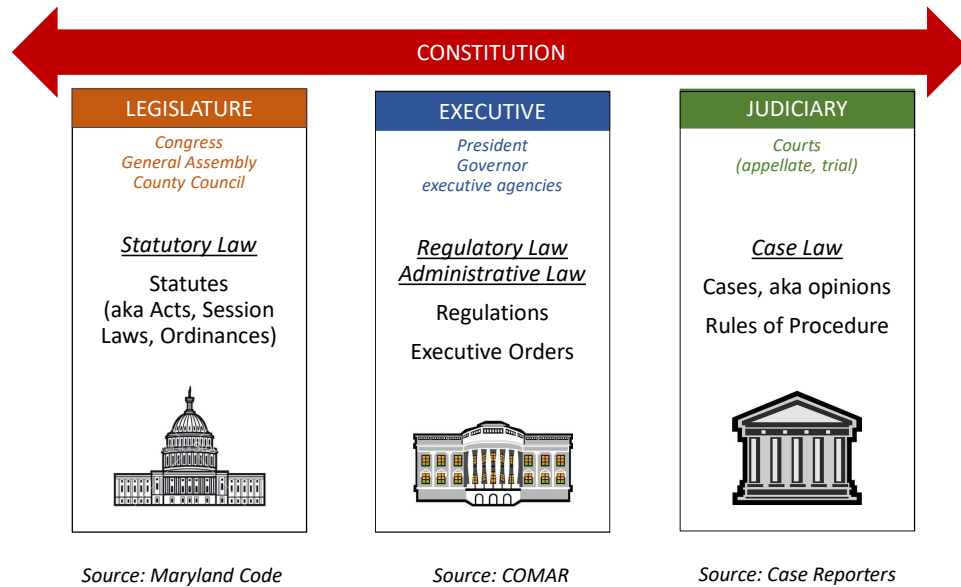
Test Yourself – Is it Law?

- Maryland Code
- Senate Bill
- Federal Register
- COMAR
- Carroll County Code
- Annapolis City Ordinance
- Brief in the opinion of Smith vs. Doe
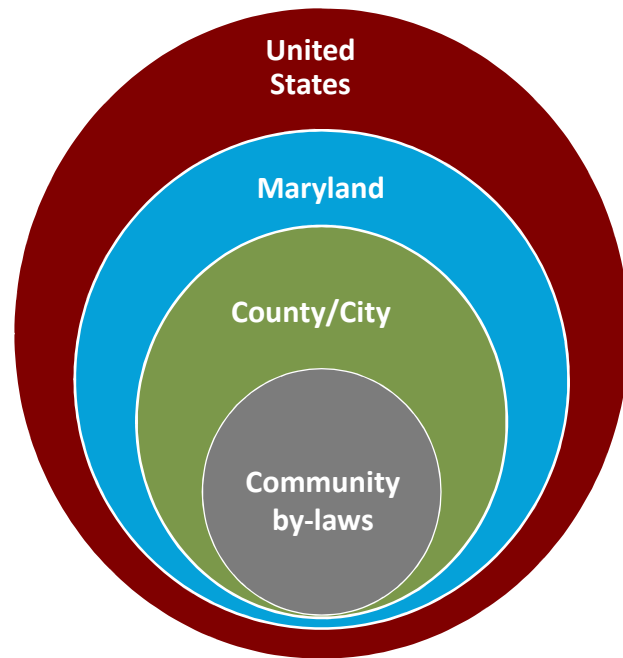
The "need to know" for effective reference

Three branches and the law they make

CONSTITUTION

LEGISLATURE	EXECUTIVE	JUDICIARY
Congress *General Assembly* *County Council*	*President* *Governor* *executive agencies*	*Courts* *(appellate, trial)*
Statutory Law	*Regulatory Law* *Administrative Law*	*Case Law*
Statutes (aka Acts, Session Laws, Ordinances)	Regulations Executive Orders	Cases, aka opinions Rules of Procedure

Source: Maryland Code   *Source: COMAR*   *Source: Case Reporters*

Let's watch a quick video...

Location, Location!
Where something takes place matters

United States
Maryland
County/City
Community by-laws

Importance of Dates
Why does it matter?

Language of Law
What does it mean?

Recognizing Citation Formats

Md Code, Family Law §5-104

07.01.02.05

Jane Doe vs. John Johnson, 413 Md. 817

Finding the Law

https://mdcourts.gov/lawlib/research/gateway-to-md-law

Practice Time

Using the Gateway to Maryland Law, find the following:

1. Md Code, Nat. Res. §4-803 – what is this section about?

2. Find the Md Code section that addresses actions for evictions for nonpayment of rent in a mobile home park.

3. Find the COMAR regulations addressing the topic from question #1

4. Does your local county code include any language about the keeping of chickens?

Court Structure

Maryland Courts

Federal Courts
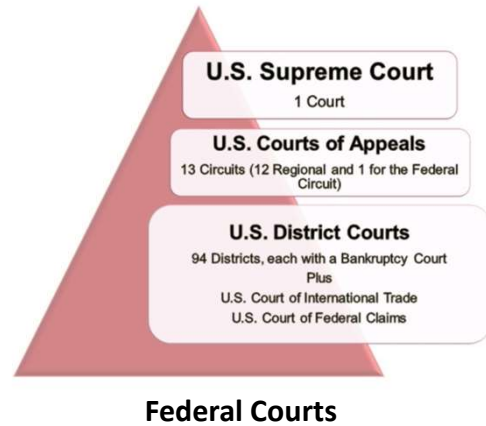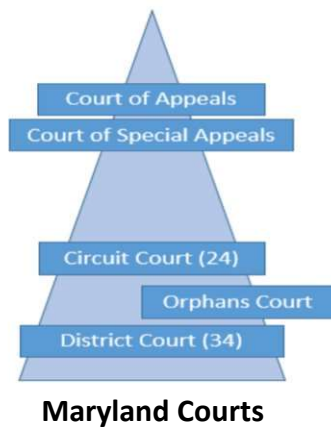
Case Law

Secondary Sources
- Can provide citations to primary law

Case law databases
- Westlaw / Lexis (fee-based)
- Google Scholar (free)

Practice Time

Using the Maryland PLL website, find the article on Defamation Law; locate and write down the citations to the two Maryland cases cited for this topic.

Then, go to Google Scholar. Look up one of the two citations you identified. Check the "how cited" tab. Does the other case appear in the list?

Forms

Standardized

Unrestricted

Filed with the Court

Not filed with the Court
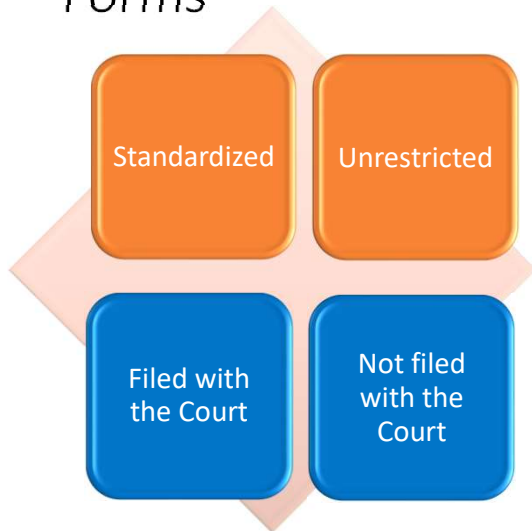
- Standardized fill-in-the-blank forms are rare in MD
- Standard court forms are on MDcourts.gov
- MD Rules contains formatting
- Sample forms books provide examples and guidance
- Identifying the right form is often *advice*
- When in doubt – contact a law library

Standardized Forms		Unrestricted Forms	
Filed in Court	**Not Filed in Court**	**Filed in Court**	**Not Filed in Court**
Most District Court Forms	Power of Attorney	Motions	Wills
Most Family Law Forms		Complex Civil Complaints	Leases
Bankruptcy			Contracts

Let's find some forms...

Using the free version of Westlaw's Maryland Code & Rules from the Gateway to Maryland Law, find the statutory form for a limited power of attorney.

Using the Maryland Judiciary's website, find the form for Petition for Guardianship of a Minor.

Maryland Law Libraries

Thurgood Marshall State Law Library 👤

Circuit Court Law Libraries		
Allegany County	Charles County	Prince George's County 👤
Anne Arundel County 👤	Dorchester County	Queen Anne's County
Baltimore City 👤	Frederick County	St. Mary's County
Baltimore County 👤	Garrett County	Somerset County
Calvert County	Harford County	Talbot County
Caroline County	Howard County 👤	Washington County
Carroll County 👤	Kent County	Wicomico County
Cecil County	Montgomery County 👤	Worcester County

mdcourts.gov/ccll

When you hit a wall…

Post-Assessment

Look at your responses to the following questions. Is your response different now than it was at the beginning of this class?

1. When someone asks for the law, they just need the Code.

2. If a patron asks for a legal form, I know where to look to find it.

3. Laws are pretty much the same between the states. What is law in Pennsylvania is the same as in Maryland.

4. If a patron wants to appeal their case, I know that information on the Court of Appeals is all that they need.

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Self-Education: Basic Civics

- Schoolhouse Rock, *Three Ring Circus* (YouTube)
- Center for Civic Education
- National Constitution Center video collection
- USA.gov/branches-of-government

Questions?

TMSLL/CMCLLD/MdA2JC 2022 03 rev.   26